

Brittany, Normandy  
and  
Other Views of France



MILMO-PENNY FINE ART

# Exhibition of Paintings

## *Brittany, Normandy and Other Views of France*

Essays by  
Dominic Milmo-Penny



19<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023

MILMO-PENNY FINE ART

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**Emma Herland 1855 - 1947**



*Le Matin d'une Noce*

1. Oil on canvas 35 x 53 inches

Signed by the artist and dated 1889

Exhibited: Paris, Salon des Artistes Français, 1889, no.1333

Born in Cherbourg in 1855, Emma Herland moved with her family to Brest where her father was stationed as a naval officer. She displayed a natural gift for painting as a child and later received formal training under Alexandre Fischer, Benjamin-Constant Lefebvre, Jules Lefebvre and at the Académie Julian, Paris, in 1887 and 1888. Considering this formal academic background, it is hardly surprising to find that her paintings display a quality unsurpassed by her contemporaries. She moved to Concarneau in 1884 and established a studio where she produced a number of large format market scenes. Her work records the Breton way of life in coastal scenes, church exteriors, washer-women and other genre and figurative work. However, she is best remembered for her interiors, and the current work might well be regarded as her masterpiece.

It is 9.55 in the morning of a bright summer's day. Sunlight floods through the windows illuminating the white coiffes of the bride's entourage. Nevertheless, an umbrella held by the seated woman suggests that rain is expected. A small child looks on as final adjustments are made to the exquisite silk costume of the young bride. Another girl, perhaps an older sister, tidies garments lying over a chair in the background. The groom's party remain outside, some standing on the stairs, as he delivers a posy for his bride through a door guarded by another young girl. The interior is surprisingly elegant. A grandfather clock stands as high as the door. A large dresser and other shelves are laden with colourful local ceramics. In the background, copper pots and pans adorn the walls. The scene evokes an overall air of prosperity suggesting that the bride might be the daughter of a wealthy merchant or farmer.

## Edgar Melville Ward 1839-1915



*Washing Day, Brittany*

2. Oil on canvas 33 x 27 inches

Signed by the artist and dated 1874

Inscribed verso 'No.169'.

Edgar Melville Ward, a brother of the well-known sculptor, John Quincy Adams Ward, arrived in Brittany in 1874, about the same time as Thomas Hovenden who was working in the group of painters who had gathered around the enigmatic Robert Wylie. Augustus Burke and Aloysius O'Kelly were also there at this time. Ward was born in Urbana, Ohio, where he had his formal education. This was followed by study at the National Academy of Design in New York. In unison with his Irish contemporaries, Ward continued his studies in Paris where he trained under Alexandre Cabanel at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Ward was essentially a genre painter, and became well known for his depiction of people engaged in the activities of daily life and particularly portraying those employed in rural crafts. Some well-known examples are *Breton Washwomen* (1876); *The Sabot Maker* (1878); *The Collar Shop* (1892) and *The Coppersmith* (1898), which is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. In *A Brittany Interior* (MPFA 2008) Ward depicts a young woman in fine traditional costume, which has suffered from the wear and tear of everyday use. She pauses from her work, and stares intensely into the distance, perhaps dreaming of a better life. The current work is not quite as sombre. Painted with meticulous attention to detail, Ward captures the concentration on the faces of the two washer women as they combine forces in a four-handed wringing routine, the dispersed water flowing back into the stream. A wide copper pan sits on a skillet under which a fire has been lit. They are watched closely by another who kneels by the stream with a clothes beater in hand and a large bar of soap in a small bowl. The painting displays three different forms of head-dress, which identifies the setting as Fouesnant, on the south coast of Finistère, west of Concarneau.

### William John Hennessy 1839 – 1917



*Gathering Apples, Normandy*

3. Oil on canvas, 71 x 40 inches. Signed by the artist and dated 1884,

Provenance: Sotheby's, London, May 2006, lot 29

Exhibited: Autumn Exhibition, Manchester, 1884, number 361;

Milmo-Penny Fine Art, December 2006

William John Hennessy was born at Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny on the 11th July 1839. His father, John Hennessy, was forced to flee his homeland following his involvement with the Young Ireland movement of 1848. He landed in Canada but moved to New York soon afterwards where his wife Catherine and their two sons joined him in 1849. Private tutors provided most of William's education. While still in his early teens he made his first drawings from life. In 1854 he gained entry to the National Academy of Design. His first exhibit was shown at the Academy three years later from an address at 87 Franklin Street. From 1860 onwards, his exhibition address was given as New York University. He was elected an associate of the Academy in 1861 and an academician in 1863. He presented *The Wood Gleaner*, an oil sketch on paper, as the representative example of his work, which he was obliged to present on election. The paintings and illustrations, which he produced from his New York studio during these years, won him considerable acclaim. His landscapes were particularly praised, as was his ability to paint a good sky.

In 1870, shortly after his second marriage, he moved to London and spent the summer months in Normandy where he had a residence close to the port of Honfleur. A school of painting, based in Saint Siméon's Inn, was already well established there. Corot, Isabey and Huet were amongst the first painters of the group. Boudin, who was born there, invited Courbet, Jongkind and Monet to join them. It was at this time that Boudin encouraged Monet to paint in the open air and it was this activity that led to the advent of Impressionism. Hennessy might have had this in mind when he painted *An Impressionist at Work; Scene in a Normandy Cider Orchard*, which he sent to the Royal Academy in 1881. Other Calvados works include *Normandy Pippin*, 1879; *In a Normandy Cider Orchard*, 1880 and *En Fête – Calvados*, 1882.

William John Hennessy 1839 – 1917



*Shrimpers, Normandy*

4. Oil on canvas, 24 x 48 inches.

Signed by the artist and dated 1886

Provenance: Sotheby's, London, May 2006, lot 30

Milmo-Penny Fine Art, March 2013

Scenes set in cider orchards recur many times in Hennessy's work. Perhaps the best known version is *Fête Day in a Cider Orchard, Normandy*, painted in 1878 and now in the Ulster Museum. A related work of 1877, *A Couple Seated Before an Inn*, shows a young man and woman seated at a bench with a pitcher of cider. A girl sits in the doorway wearing the traditional costume similar to that worn by the woman who bends down to gather apples in the painting on the previous page. Hennessy must have been conscious of Millet's work, when he drew this figure in her back-breaking pose. The apples are shaken from the tree by a man with a long pole. His pose and that of the stooping woman are reminiscent of Osborne's famous orchard scene painted in Quimperlé in the previous year. Hennessy was familiar with Osborne's painting or that they both borrowed from the same motifs. The scene portrays an idyllic lifestyle. The orchard is set behind a traditional thatched Norman farmhouse from which an old woman approaches with an empty basket. A dappled light falls on the rich and fertile grasses that grow amongst the trees. A young woman in more modern dress has filled her basket. She leans to one side against its weight as she carries it off to the cider press.

Shrimping groups working the tides on the coast of Normandy was a favourite topic in the coastal art colonies of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hennessy's version is a fine example of the genre. Idyllic as it might appear to the viewer, the work was hard and the returns were slight. Nevertheless, coastal villagers working in family groups were well prepared to take advantage of seasonal opportunities such as this. Apart from the weight of the soaked nets, the shrimpers had to deal with the weight of the catch, which could be considerable on a good day. There is a slight stoop in the two main figures in the current work as they lead the retreat barefooted from the incoming tide with apparently full baskets. A Steamer on the horizon and distant headland set the perspective as the group pass the sad skeleton of a wreck, reminiscent of Nataniel Hone's *Derelict* on St. Marnock's Sands.

William John Hennessy 1839 – 1917



*Return from the Well, Brittany*

5. Oil on canvas 48 x 24 inches

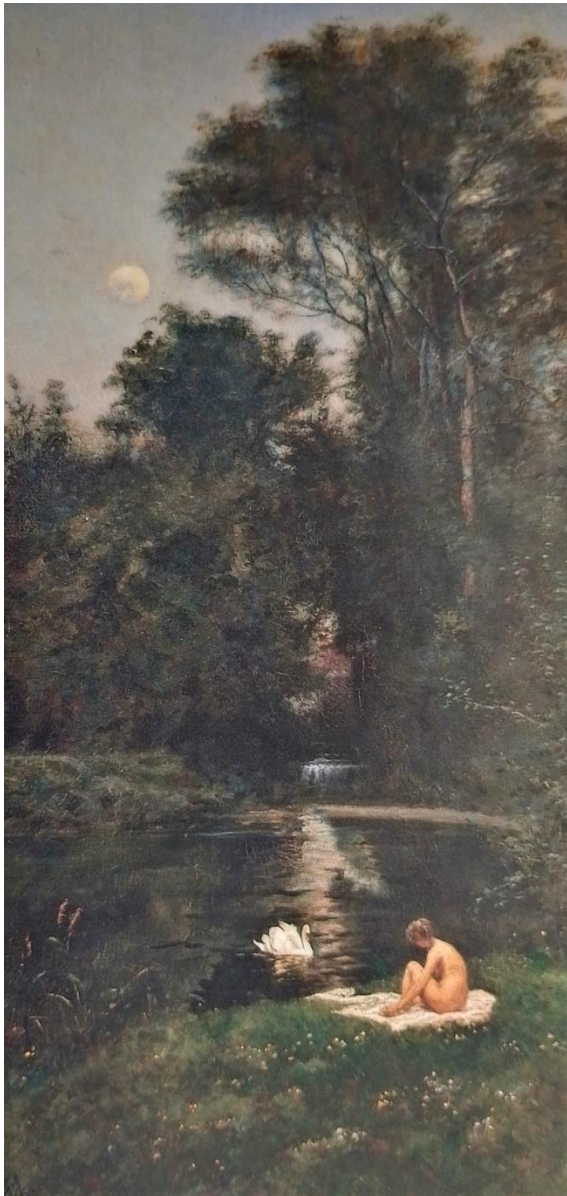
Provenance: R. & G. Sadde, Dijon, France

Exhibited: Milmo-Penny Fine Art, December 2008, no.3

**RESERVED**

The routine of drawing water was a very common theme amongst Hennessy's contemporaries. In the current work, pails are carried with the aid of a hoop, which prevents injury to the legs. The device is more often found Normandy. In a number of works by Jules Dupre, the hoop is employed to carry pails from the fields to the dairy. It was also used in America to carry water to the laundry. However, in our painting, the water is more likely to be for the household. Many Breton wells were regarded as holy places protected by elaborate stonework such as that shown here. A man-made spill keeps the water fresh and oxygenated. Hennessy is well known for his ability to paint a good sky, which is one of features of this work. Its companion piece, *A Summer Evening*, is dated 1886, which is probably the date of the current work also.

William John Hennessy 1839 – 1917



*A Summer Evening*

6. Oil on canvas 48 x 24 inches.

Signed by the artist and dated 1886;

Inscribed verso: 107 Piccadilly, London and with title on the stretcher.

Provenance: R. & C. Sadde, Dijon, France

Exhibited: Milmo-Penny Fine Art, December 2008, no.8

**RESERVED**

Perhaps inspired by the Greek legend of 'Leda and the Swan', the story describes Leda's rescue of Zeus who, in the guise of a swan, was pursued by an eagle. It was a popular theme in Renaissance art and remained so through the centuries. However, the current work is far removed from the traditional motif and is more likely to have been painted as a straightforward portrayal of an evening bather. The lighting is well handled with a shaft of moonlight breaking through the trees and highlighting the waterfall in the background.

**Théophile Louis Deyrolle 1844-1923**



*Repos des Faneuses*

7. Oil on canvas 36 x 50 inches

Signed by the artist

Title inscribed on label verso; Chenu, 5 rue de Terasse, Paris, no.159

Packers label verso, Ferret, Neveu; Roubaix Tourcoing 1901

Exhibited:

Paris, Salon des Artistes Francais, 1898, no.670, illustrate p.111

Literature:

Charles-Guy Le Paul, La bibliothèque des Arts Lausanne, Paris, 1983. Illustrated page 13;

Judy Le Paul, 'Gauguin and the impressionists at Pont-Aven', Abbeville Press, New York, 1987, illus. p.13.

Regarded by many as one of his best works, *Repos des Faneuses* is a great example of Deyrolle's depiction of everyday life in Brittany. He was a jovial painter and a terrific storyteller through his work. Four harvesters sit in a circle at the end of a day's harvesting; five sisters perhaps overlooked by the eldest. One holds a pitch fork, another holds a rake. One holds on to a kettle, which sits beside their picnic. It appears that there are two different conversations going on and that the elder sister might not approve of what she is hearing. In the background, the evening light of sunset falls through an orchard on to a lush meadow surrounded by forestry. The red head-dress on the harvester to the right adds vital warmth to the painting, a device established by Corot and often borrowed by the Breton School.

Théophile Louis Deyrolle 1844-1923



*Pardon Haut*

8. Oil on canvas 32 x 46 inches.

Signed by the artist and on a label verso

Inscribed with title verso 'Pardon Haut'

*La Lutte Bretonne*, an alternative title of more recent times, tells a far more intriguing story. Translated, *The Breton Struggle*, might well be a play on words. However, Deyrolle's original title, *Pardon Haut*, is inscribed verso and is more meaningful. Painted about 1890, the setting is a field known as 'Le Dérout Lollichon' situated on high ground above Pont-Aven. According to Andre Cariou, there is therefore the religious feast at the level of the church *below in the village* and the profane feast with the combatant struggles *above*, hence the *High Pardon*. This particular Pardon takes place about the 20<sup>th</sup> September every year and to this day is traditionally followed by the wrestling tournament. The sheep held by the young boy in our painting goes to the winner of the tournament. The same field appears in several paintings by Gauguin and Emile Bernard painted another version of the wrestling match, *Les Lutteurs a Pont-Aven*.

**Harry Scully R.H.A. 1863 – 1935**



*Mending Clothes, Brittany*

9. Watercolour on paper 25 x 21 inches

Signed by the artist and dated 1908

Framers label verso, Gilbert's Art Gallery, 120 Patrick Street, Cork

Provenance: John Gilbert, New Art Gallery, Cork, circa 1910;

Private collection, Dublin;

Herman Wilkinson, Dublin, March 2020.

Harry Scully was one of the Irish artists painting in Brittany during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Chief among these was Walter Osborne, to whom Scully's work has traditionally been compared. One of Scully's first paintings from Brittany, *Young Girl in a Church*, 1896, was included in our 2001 catalogue. He sent *A Washing Place at Quimperle* to the Royal Academy, London, in 1901 and exhibited the same work at the RHA in 1902. The painting was widely praised at both venues. Other works from this period include *Mother and Child*, (MPFA 2001) and *A Breton Interior*, exhibited in 1909. He returned to Brittany for a short while in 1932.

In *Mending Clothes*, Scully employs a typical Breton motif, which may be compared to Aloysius O'Kelly's *In the Sunshine, Brittany*, (MPFA 2003) in which two young girls engage in conversation standing by a gate, one of them crocheting a garment. Similar themes revolve around knitting, darning and other handwork. In the current example, a young girl, perhaps a grand-daughter joins an elderly woman as she mends clothes outside her cottage. Scully displays his skill in depicting the dappled light as it filters through the branches of a tree, a much more difficult task in watercolour than in oil. In the foreground, a single-wheeled plough, painted with remarkable attention to detail, leads the eye into the painting.

**Fernand Le Goût-Gérard 1854 – 1924**



*Needle Workers on the Quayside*

10. Oil on panel 7 x 10 inches

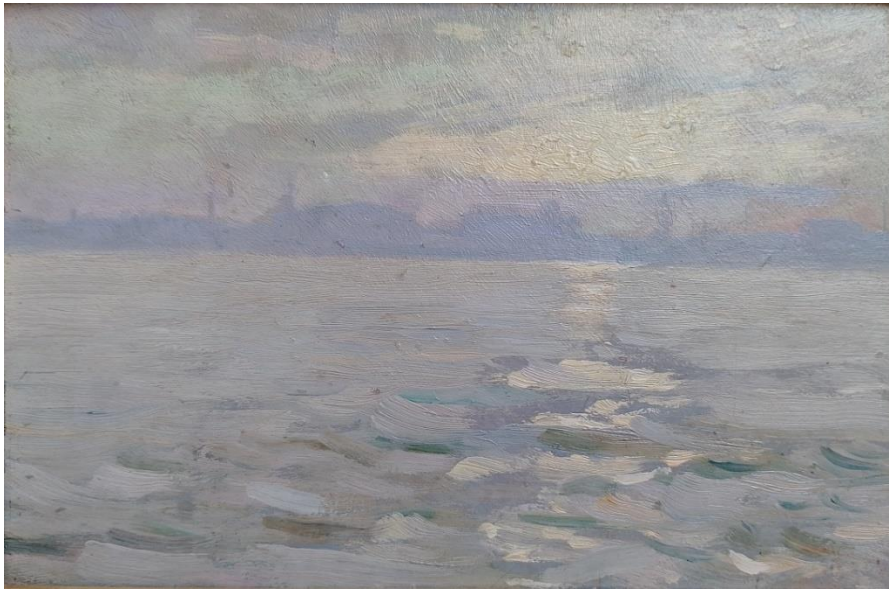
Signed by the artist

**SOLD**

Fernand Le Goût-Gérard was born in Saint-Lo in the Manche region of France in October 1854. He developed an early interest in painting and from the age of fourteen he occupied himself in copying works of eighteenth century masters. A chance meeting with the painter Meissonnier led to his first exhibition in 1889, after which he was introduced to the thriving artistic community in Concarneau, where he painted for the next forty years. In 1903, he bought a villa in the town and installed a studio with magnificent views across the bay. Concarneau was to remain the central focus of Le Goût-Gérard throughout his career as a painter. Dedicated to realism, he experimented with light and shade and strove to capture the atmospheric light of the rising and setting sun, vividly displaying the departure of fishing boats in the morning and their return at sunset. He did not confine himself to Brittany and painted also in Normandy, Italy, Greece, Holland and North Africa. However, Brittany was his first love and he remained loyal to the region for life.

Market and harbour scenes were his main topics. Filled with people engaged in routine activities, one finds an unmistakeable animation, which sets his work apart. The current painting is a typical example. A group of women sit on the edge of the quayside waiting for the boats to return with their catch. They are all engaged in needlework of one sort or another, their pose suggesting knitting or crocheting. A number of boats are visible out at sea while a few others have returned and entered harbour. The boat in front has lowered the main sail and strung their net between the masts to dry.

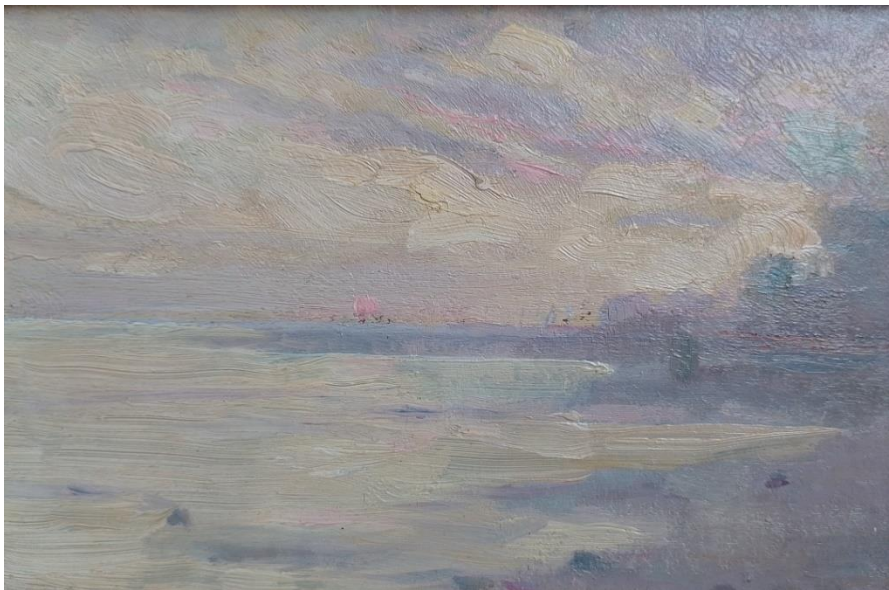
Fernand Le Goût-Gérard 1854 – 1924



*Distant Harbour at Sunset*

11. Oil on panel 4½ x 7 inches

**SOLD**



*Harbour Beyond an Inlet*

12. Oil on panel 4½ x 7 inches

Provenance: J.P. Gill Esq. 19 Herbert St. Dublin;  
his dispersal, Sandycove, 1984.

**SOLD**

It is tempting to name the harbour as Concarneau. However, assuming they both portray the same scene, it has all the appearances of a larger and more commercial harbour, perhaps painted by Legout-Gérard on his travels. Two companion pieces appeared at auction recently.

**Pierre-Célestin Billet 1837 – 1922**



*Breton Village*

13. Oil on panel 10 x 16 inches

Signed by the artist

The French genre painter and engraver, Pierre-Célestin Billet, was born in Cantin, Nord, in November 1837. He had a successful career at the Paris Salon where he made his debut at the age of thirty. Inspired by his master, Jules Breton, his paintings illustrate daily life in the French countryside in much the same way as his English counterparts; market scenes, peasant field-workers, shepherds and fishermen. Billet's work may also be compared to that of Leon Lhermitte, another of Breton's disciples. The rarity of works by Billet may explain why he is less well known even though his talent can be compared to that of Lhermitte. Indeed, Tolstoy regarded Breton, Lhermitte, Jules Bastien-Lepage and Jean-Francois Millet as the four great painters of his age. It is hardly a coincidence that they were all painters of peasant subject matter.

Although he was not alone in his endeavours, it could be said that Millet was the first to portray the peasant at work in the stereotype with which we have become familiar. The distinctive difference between his interpretation and the later renditions of his follower, Jules Breton, was a softening of the harshness portrayed by Millet and a sentimental idealisation of the lifestyle. The explanation for the diversification may be explained by Millet's peasant roots, which would never have allowed him the luxury of portraying the lifestyle in any form other than the harshness of reality.

The scene portrayed here is typical of Breton work of the period. One can imagine the delight experienced by the artist as he set up his easel to record the tranquillity of this small hamlet, bathed in evening light and watched over by ever-present church steeple.

**Edith Le Saulnier de la Villehelio (1880-1952).**



*La porteuse d'eau.*

14. Oil on canvas 33 x 18 inches

Signed by the artist and 1888.

Very little is known about the artist, perhaps because she did not exhibit her work. However, the quality of the painting indicates that she had a formal training. Surprisingly, no other works by her have surfaced. The daughter of Amédée Le Saulnier de la Villehelio and Marguerite d'Armana, she had two sisters, Yvonne and Odette. Records show that she married Hector du Poy in 1897 in Dax, an old Roman town in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, northwest of Bayonne.

## Breton School



*Breton Market*

15 & 16. Oil on panel 10 x 13 inches

Signed Martin

A pair

**SOLD**

These early 19<sup>th</sup> century panels are painted with a broad brush and remarkable confidence, which suggests a journeyman artist. Both scenes are reminiscent of Concarneau, which might lead to the identification of the painter.

## Edward Drummond Young 1876-1946



*A Corner of the Market, Concarneau*

17. Oil on canvas 19½ x 15½ inches

Signed by the artist

Title inscribed on label verso, No. II

with an address at 8 Randolph Crescent, Edinburgh

Johnson and Greutzner's Dictionary of British Artists refers to Edmund D. Young who is probably the same as artist listed in Harris and Halsby's Dictionary of Scottish painters as Edward Drummond Young. He exhibited flower paintings at the Royal Scottish Academy between 1908 and 1940 and also exhibited at Glasgow, Liverpool and the Royal Academy, London and also worked as a photographer in Edinburgh. A fine still life in the style of the Glasgow colourists was sold in London in 2001. His book, 'The Art of the Photograph' was published in 1931. He founded the Pen and Pencil Club and the Rustic Arts Club.

The bright bluish tonality of the present painting is reminiscent of William John Leech, as is the manner in which the paint is handled. The long shadow cast by the figures suggests early morning. A woman in Breton costume busies herself with the reins of her cart horse. Perhaps she has just arrived from an outlying village and has brought produce for the market stalls. She has thrown some hay for the horse to feed on beneath the tree, which also provides shade from the morning sun. Another horse is tethered alongside as shoppers make their way to and from the market. The setting is a corner of one of the many side streets, which lead into the town from the quayside. The market in Concarneau continues to this day and takes place on the quayside in the old port.

**Blanche Duhennoy b.1900**



*Bathers on the Seine*

18. Oil on board 15 x 19 inches

Signed by the artist

Born in Bourg-en-Bresse in the alpine region of Auvergne-Rhône, Blanche moved to Paris to study under Louis Roger. In 1921, she exhibited at the Salon des Artistes Français, Paris.

Better known for her flower paintings, this river scene shows a group of bathers on the quay below Place de la Concorde and the Cours la Réine. Above them is the Pont de la Concorde, built 1787-1791. Beyond the bridge we can see roof of the Louvre and on the left, the roof of the Jeu de Paume museum. Under the near arch, a barge enters the Port des Tuileries which presumably is where the blue boat has sailed from. Beneath the third arch, we find a view of the Passerelle.

## Barbizon School



*On the Loing, Montigny*

19. Oil on canvas 15 x 18 inches

Signed Ropton b.r.

Ropton is common in the Loire valley between Mayenne in the west and Eure-et-Loire in the east. However, no exhibiting artist bearing the name has been traced. Nevertheless, this is a fine work, painted on the river bank just below Montigny, which hosted one of the most active of the Barbizon colonies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Edmond Van Coppenolle 1846-1914**



*Chrysanthemums in a Blue Vase*

20. Oil on canvas 20 x 26 inches

Signed by the artis

As a young artist, in 1872 Edmond van Coppenolle moved to Montigny to work at the Schopin porcelain factory and established a substantial studio on the Grande-Rue. He specialised in studies of poultry in Indian ink, which were used for the decoration of the porcelain produced by the factory. Apart from this particular occupation, he was renowned for his oil paintings of flowers, influenced by the Dutch masters of the 17th century but painted in an Impressionist manner. There was a fashion in France at the time for garden flowers and natural still life studies of which the current work is a prime example. Staged in a beautiful ceramic vase, typical of the factory at Montigny, the painting displays the delicate skills of both Coppenolle and Eugene Schopin.

**Lillie Honnorat b. circa 1860**



*Roses in a Glass Vase*

21. Oil on canvas 22 x 15 inches

Signed by the artist

Lillie Honnorat was another fine French flower painter, born circa 1860. We can date the current painting by comparing it to other examples from the early 1890s. It appears that she did not exhibit her work, perhaps due to a ready outlet for it. In much the same way as the English have a way with watercolour, the French surpass all when it comes to flower painting. From the unrecorded to the Impressionists, many fine examples abound. Apart from the challenges encountered in staging an arrangement and reproducing the delicate colours of nature in oil paint, technical difficulties such as portraying reflected light and the distorted appearance of objects in water have to be overcome.

**Jean-Frédéric Couty 1829-1904**



*Summer Flowers*

22. Oil on canvas 18 x 12 inches

Signed by the artist

with a dedication to Madame Falies

Born in Issoudun in the Val de Loire, Couty was a landscape, genre and flower painter. According to Benezit, he was a pupil of Billoux, exhibiting at the Paris Salon in 1864 and 1867. One of his best still lifes, *Poissons*, is in the collection of the Louvre. His career was also recorded by Hardouin-Fugier and Grafe in their Dictionary of 19<sup>th</sup> century 'French Flower Painters' where they list a number of still life exhibits at the Salons of Dijon and Lyon between 1883 and 1887.